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LETTER DATED 24 FEBRUARY 2000 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In paragraph 26 of its resolution 1284 (1999) of 17 December 1999, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to make the necessary arrangements for approval by the Council, to provide for reasonable expenses related to the Hajj pilgrimage to be met by funds in the escrow account established by Council resolution 986 (1995). In the same resolution, the Council also decided that Hajj pilgrimage flights that did not transport cargo into or out of Iraq were exempt from the provisions of paragraph 3 of Council resolution 661 (1990) and Council resolution 670 (1990), provided timely notification of each flight was made to the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990).

According to the Government of Iraq, under the Iraqi quota for the Hajj pilgrimage established by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the total number of pilgrims is 24,700. Previous communications from the Government of Iraq, particularly to the Chairman of the Security Council Committee, indicated that $2,000 was required per pilgrim. The total amount required to cover the Hajj pilgrimage for Iraq, therefore, would be $49.4 million (see annex for statement of implementation of the Hajj pilgrimage).

Pursuant to paragraph 26 of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999), and taking into full account the relevant provisions of Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 661 (1990), 670 (1990) and 986 (1995), I should like to submit, for the consideration of the Council, the following arrangements:

(a) The Government of Iraq should provide the United Nations with a list of the names of the Iraqi pilgrims, including details of their respective travel documents, with an indication of mode and route of travel, by land or by air;

(b) Funds from the United Nations Iraq account, sufficient to provide each pilgrim with approximately $250 to cover local costs inside Iraq related to the pilgrimage, including pocket money, will be transferred to the United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (UNOHCI) in Baghdad. Each pilgrim will receive $250 in cash and will sign a document confirming the receipt of the funds concerned, to be witnessed and signed by a representative of UNOHCI and a representative of the Government of Iraq;

(c) All other expenses required for the pilgrimage will be handled through a third party as follows: for pilgrims travelling through Jordan, and for those travelling directly to Saudi Arabia, expenses and funds will be handled by the designated agencies in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, respectively;

(d) The agencies concerned will submit to the United Nations certified lists with the names of each pilgrim who has arrived in Jordan or Saudi Arabia;

(e) The United Nations will transfer the necessary funds from the United Nations Iraq account to the agencies concerned in Jordan and Saudi Arabia to cover the cost of the pilgrimage.

I should like to express my sincere appreciation to the Governments of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which have expressed their readiness to assist with this endeavour.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN
Secretary-General

Annex

The Hajj pilgrimage: statement of implementation

In accordance with the agreement reached at the "informal informal" consultations of the Security Council, the following represents a statement of implementation for making available the necessary funds to meet expenses related to the Hajj pilgrimage.

The agreement envisages the distribution in Baghdad, Iraq, by the United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (UNOHCI) of $1,750 in traveller's cheques and $250 in cash (as pocket money to meet local costs, and so forth) to each Iraqi pilgrim.

1. The total funds required, $49.4 million, will be drawn from the United Nations Iraq account at Banque nationale de Paris (BNP)/Paribas and transferred to an established bank in Amman, Jordan.

2. Standard traveller's cheques with a total of $43,225,000 ($1,750 per pilgrim) will be obtained from the bank in Jordan in booklets containing $50, $100 and $500. A total amount of $6,175,000 in cash ($250 per pilgrim) will also be obtained.

3. Senior UNOHCI officials, accompanied by United Nations security personnel with additional support as necessary from the Jordanian authorities, will receive the total funds at the bank. They will escort the funds, in coordination with the United Nations established courier service, to a United Nations aircraft that has received prior approval from the Security Council Committee established by Council resolution 661 (1990), and the Government of Iraq, to fly to Baghdad with the specific purpose of delivering the above funds to UNOHCI in Iraq.

4. Upon its arrival in Iraq, the United Nations aircraft will be met by United Nations security personnel with additional local security support as necessary. All security personnel will escort the funds by road in United Nations vehicles to UNOHCI headquarters in Baghdad. The funds will be kept in the UNOHCI vault and guarded by United Nations security and local security personnel on a 24-hour basis.

5. Designated UNOHCI staff, supervised by senior UNOHCI finance and administrative personnel, will collate $250 in cash and $1,750 in traveller's cheques to be distributed to each Iraqi pilgrim.

6. Distribution of the funds will be based upon the lists of names of the Iraqi pilgrims presented to the United Nations by the Government of Iraq. Distribution will be undertaken in the presence of UNOHCI personnel and representatives of the Government of Iraq. Pilgrims will travel to UNOHCI headquarters in Baghdad to receive the funds where the following procedures will apply:

(a) Each pilgrim will furnish identification upon the presentation of which UNOHCI personnel will confirm that the pilgrim is on the list submitted by the Government of Iraq;

(b) Each pilgrim signs the allocated traveller's cheques in the presence of a UNOHCI staff member and a representative of the Government of Iraq, and signs against his/her name in the list provided by the Government of Iraq to confirm receipt;

(c) Each pilgrim receives $250 in cash and signs against his/her name on the list provided by the Government of Iraq to confirm receipt.

7. UNOHCI will inform immediately the United Nations Treasury of any funds not distributed to pilgrims. Stop-payments will be issued against the traveller's cheques not distributed. UNOHCI will retain any cash funds that have not been distributed and ensure that the equivalent amount is transferred from the ESD (2.2 per cent) account to the ESB (53 per cent) account.

8. Upon completion of the distribution of funds, the lists will be sent to the relevant authorities in Saudi Arabia positioned to receive the Iraqi pilgrims at the designated entry points into Saudi Arabia.

9. On the basis of the lists, the relevant authorities in Saudi Arabia will confirm the entry of Iraqi pilgrims into Saudi Arabia. Subsequent to the end of the Hajj season, the lists will be returned to UNOHCI headquarters where UNOHCI personnel will undertake a cross-referencing exercise to verify that all pilgrims in receipt of funds entered Saudi Arabia.

10. Any discrepancies will be reported directly to the Executive Director of the Iraq Programme, who will in turn report to the Security Council for its appropriate action.

1 March 2000